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## For the 2nd Time In A Row, Youth Poetry Team Meta4 Houston Wins National Championship at Brave New Voices (BNV) in Washington, D.C.

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Meta-Four Houston 2024: (L-R) Adriana Winkelmayr, Cristina Perez-Ruiz, Amaya Newsome, Samiyah Green, Mya Skelton and Bela Kalra

Photo Credit: Alinda Mac

In an impressive display of poetic dexterity and artistic expression, Houston's youth poetry team, Meta4 Houston, won the prestigious Brave New Voices International Poetry Slam for the second consecutive year on July 20, 2024, solidifying their position as the top youth poets in the country.

The Brave New Voices International Poetry Festival aims to amplify youth voices by providing a platform that connects poetry, spoken word, youth development, and civic engagement.

For the past 40 years, Writers in the Schools has been at the forefront of literary arts for youth in Houston and has supported the team since its inception. After months of dedication and preparation, the team presented poems on difficult topics including Texas climate change, gun violence, fast fashion, the human condition, and how the best role model is one willing to make change.

This year, the six members of the Meta4 Youth Poetry Fellowship are Bela Kalra (High School for the Performing and Visual Arts), Amaya Newsome (Humble High School), Cristina Perez-Ruiz (High School for the Performing and Visual Arts), Mya Skelton (Humble High School), and returning fellows Samiyah Green (High School for the Performing and Visual Arts) and Adriana Winkelmayr (Emery/Weiner Jewish School). Under the mentorship of Houston Poet Laureate Emeritus Emanuelee “Outspoken” Bean and Meta4 Alumni Alinda “Adam” Mac, the poets wrote, choreographed, and rehearsed a collection of poems that represented their experiences as young people living in the city of Houston.

Giuseppe Taurino, Executive Director for Writers in the Schools says, “We’re ecstatic for the Meta4 Houston Fellows. These powerful young artists have been hard at work honing their craft for months and are deserving of this great win. Their dedication to exploring, investigating, and genuinely interacting with the world around them is inspiring.”

Earlier this year, the poets competed at the annual Space City Grand Slam for a chance to earn one of six coveted Meta4 Houston fellow spots on the Meta4 Houston fellows, and subsequently to represent Houston at Brave New Voices in Washington, D.C.

They also competed in a regional slam against the Dallas Youth Poets during the Space City Slam Weekend in Houston, Texas. At Brave New Voices, sixteen youth poetry teams from around the globe competed in semi-final slam bouts. The top four teams—

Houston, Orlando (Exodus United), Nashville (Southern Word), and Baltimore (Dew More)—competed in four rounds of spoken word performance on the final stage in the historic Howard Theater. Houston took the top spot for the second time.

### **About Meta-Four Houston (Meta4)**

Meta-Four Houston is a program of Writers in the Schools (WITS). It is Texas' largest youth poetry slam series and has been in operation since 2007. The Meta4 Houston Youth Poetry Fellowship (formally Meta-Four Houston Slam Team) is the face of Houston's youth poetry scene.

### **About Writers in the Schools (WITS)**

Since 1983, Writers in the Schools has engaged children in the joy and power of reading and writing. The nonprofit organization partners with authors, journalists, and spoken word performers to work collaboratively with teachers to nurture the growth of the imagination and awaken students to the adventures of language. WITS strives to revolutionize the way reading and writing are taught through workshops and other activities led by professional poets and authors.